Synthetic Turf Heading to a Baranof's Baseball Outfield

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Synthetic turf in the baseball outfield at Baranof Park will soon be a reality. During last night’s city council meeting the council authorized a change order for the Baranof Park improvements project, which included the track, football field and baseball infield replacements. The change order will now include the replacement of the baseball outfield.

City Manager Aimee Kniaziowski said the Parks and Rec Advisory Board identified the outfield replacement as its number one priority back in February, and again during Tuesday’s work session.

“The city decided to keep the contract with Ohno Construction, the folks that have installed the artificial surfaces for us to date," she said. "We’ve kept that contract open in the event that there was going to be enough grant money remaining to extend that turf to the outfield, which of course there is.”

The city has $1.8 million remaining in the Baranof Park improvements project, and Ohno Construction estimates the new field will cost $1.5 million.

During the public comment period of last night’s meeting Rick Langfitt applauded the work already done to the baseball field. He said the synthetic turf recently installed on the baseball’s infield contributed to a great baseball season this spring. Langfitt said it was the first season in more than ten years that a home game wasn’t cancelled or delayed because of the condition of the field’s surface. He said the combination of a new infield and outfield will definitely set Kodiak up to host more home games, and maybe even a conference tournament.

“Kodiak has never hosted a conference tournament. All the other teams that play in the gyms, they get to host conference tournaments; we’ve never been able to host one," Langfitt said. "We should be able to host one next year. It’s the south division, which we’re a member of. It’s our turn to host. And if Mr. Ferris does a good job over at the high school of politicking he should be able to get that tournament down here."

That would be seven visiting teams coming along with their fans coming next May. Sitka has a brand new synthetic surface field and ASAA has awarded Sitka a one year contract to host the state baseball tournament next year. Lanfitt said Kodiak could look forward to having that same opportunity in a future year.

During council member comments, Councilman Charlie Davidson applauded everyone involved with the entire park improvement project for all their hard work over the years.

“It’s a grand example of how local communities can and should work together," he said. "And by the time this October rolls around we should have one of the nicest park facilities in the state.”

Ohno Construction is expected to begin work on the new field on July 15 and wrap up sometime in September.